

General and Mrs. Lynch, Congressman and Mrs. Carter, Ft. Hood soldiers and families, and to all the heroes we honor:

Good morning and may God bless each of you here today.

In the 14 years I had the privilege to represent Ft. Hood in Congress, and ever since, I have felt a sense of humility every time I have come to the Great Place, because I am so grateful to those of you who serve our nation in uniform and your families.

It is with the most profound humility that my wife, Lea Ann, my two young sons, J.T. and Garrison, and I join with you in this ceremony. Never have we been in the presence of so many who have sacrificed so much for our family and the American family.

Only now can I even begin to understand the emotions that must have been felt by President Lincoln when he stood on the battleground of Gettysburg and immortalized for all times those who have given, in his words, "their last full measure of devotion" to country.

He knew then, as we know now, that no words can adequately express our profound sense of respect for you and your loved ones for your sacrifice for country.

Recognizing that your personal sacrifice continues on long after the battle is over, we realize we can never begin to repay our debt of gratitude to you. Yet, I hope we never forget President Lincoln's call to the nation in his Second Inaugural Address to, quote, "care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan."

It is in that spirit that I had the honor of authoring into law just a few weeks ago The Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship Program. Gunnery Sergeant Fry's widow, Malia Fry, and their three children (Kathryn, Gideon and C.L.) are with us here today.

The Fry scholarships will be eligible to every child who has lost a parent in military service to our country since September 11th of 2001. First payments will not be made by the Veterans Administration until the fall of 2010, but the benefits include the college school year starting this month. The scholarships will provide the equivalent of the new GI bill benefits to every child-100% tuition at the most expensive public university in their respective states, along with approximately \$1000 a month living expenses and a \$1000 a year textbook allowance.

Even this is but a small token of our heartfelt respect, but I hope it will be seen as our country's commitment to honoring, in a meaningful way, children and families who have sacrificed so much.

To the children being honored here today, I would like to say two things to you: First, I know how much it must hurt to have lost your father, but please know that your father is a true American hero. If my two sons had the right to be half as proud of me as you have a right to be proud of your father, I would consider my life a success. Second, always remember that you are very special, because your father loved you so much, he was willing to give his life so that you could grow up in a safer, better world. No parent could love a child more unselfishly than your dad loved you.

To all the spouses and loved ones of those who gave their lives to protect our nation and our freedoms, I hope and pray that you can share the spirit of my faith, expressed in John 15:13, "Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends."

I believe that our merciful God has a special place in heaven for those who have shown the ultimate love for others here on earth.

May God forever keep your departed loved ones in His loving arms, and may He always bless you and your families.

